Politics of Authoritarian Regimes
PS 397, Spring 2013

_Instructor:_ Milan Svolik, Department of Political Science

_Class Meetings:_ Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00 - 3:20 p.m., 222 David Kinley Hall

_Office Hours:_ Fridays 3-5pm, 311 DKH, or by appointment

_Email:_ msvolik@illinois.edu

_Course Web Page:_ http://compass2g.illinois.edu

_Data Collection Assignment:_ TBD

_Midterm Book Review:_ TBD

_Final Paper:_ TBD

_No class on:_ TBD

_Description:_ For most of its history, humankind has lived under dictatorship. This course examines various aspects of the politics in authoritarian regimes: their emergence and breakdown, the policy choices and institutions they adopt, leadership change, and the theories that explain these outcomes. We will use contemporary events, historical case studies, as well as statistical data in order to examine real-world cases. The goal of this class is to introduce students to the scientific study of authoritarian politics and thus help them understand and evaluate the public policy discourse on the politics of authoritarian regimes as well as the potential for their transition to democracy.

.Course Requirements:_ Students are required to attend classes, read the assigned material, and discuss assigned research articles. The final grade will be composed as follows: class participation 30%, data collection assignment 20%, midterm book review 20%, and final research paper 30%. Class participation includes a presentation of an assigned discussion article (including a handout/summary and a few presentation slides) (10%), a paragraph-per-reading email summary of the readings assigned for each meeting (10%), and participation in the class discussion (10%).
**Attendance:** Regular attendance is required. Notify me in advance if you will be absent. The University’s official policy on absences is at
http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article1_part5_1-501.html.

**Email summaries:** I will ask you to submit a paragraph-per-reading summary/discussion of the readings assigned for each meeting to “Reading Summaries” on Compass by 11am on the day of the class (not necessarily two paragraphs per reading, just two paragraphs for all the readings assigned for a meeting). The purpose of these summaries is to facilitate your preparation for the class and encourage you to participate in class discussion. You can also use these summaries as an opportunity to provide feedback on the assigned readings.

**Participation in class discussion:** I will keep notes of your participation in class discussion. I will not post these, but you can always ask me about how you are doing.

**Class presentation:** An important part of your participation will be to present a research article of your choice (from the discussion readings listed below, (⋆) denotes a discussion reading.) Please also prepare a one-page handout of the article for the class with questions for discussion and a few presentation slides. If you email your handout to me in advance (by 5pm on the day before your presentation), I will make copies for the class. Please post your presentation slides to “Presentation Slides” on Compass.

**The midterm book review:** A five-page review and discussion of one among the following books (all have been placed on the course reserve):


For an example of a critical, analytical book review see e.g. Tony Judt’s “Whose story is it? The Cold War in Retrospect”, which is on Compass, or the book reviews that appear in journals like *The Economist, Perspectives on Politics*, and *The New Yorker*.

**Data collection assignment:** I will ask you to collect data (typically from online resources) on one topic on the syllabus. The assignment will be submitted in the form of an Excel spreadsheet. We will specify the details later.

**The final research paper:** The culmination of this course is a final research paper on a research question chosen by the instructor (maximum of 15 pages). Students can choose from among three formats: an original data collection and analysis, an original analytical argument, and a critical synthesis of a literature. We will also hold several (usually three) meetings dedicated to developing your ideas on the final paper and answering any questions. I will also distribute a handout with the criteria that I plan to use when grading the final paper. Assignments will be due on the dates established in this syllabus or in class; failure to turn an assignment on time results in an automatic failing grade for that assignment. Plagiarism will be punished severely; see the University’s official policy on academic integrity at http://admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article1_part4_1-402.html.

**In-class behavior:** All cell phones, laptop computers, and related devices must be turned off during class and stowed away. Laptop computers may be used only when explicitly requested by the instructor for a designated class purpose.

**Readings:** You are required to bring any assigned readings or materials to class. The course readings are available either on reserve at the library (books) or on Compass (articles
and book chapters). Any lecture materials will be posted on Compass.

We will read extensively from the following book, you may therefore consider purchasing it:


**Course Outline:**

**Democracy and Dictatorship: Concepts and Measures (2 meetings)**


**Case study: Elections, Competitiveness, and Political Regimes (2 meetings, bring a laptop if you can)**

**Democracy and Dictatorship: Causes (2 meetings)**


Non-democratic Regimes: Conceptual issues (1 meeting)


Case study: Classifying Dictatorships (1 meeting, bring a laptop if you can)

Theories of Authoritarian Politics (2 meetings)


Repression and Protest (1 meeting)


Case study: The Arab Spring (1 meeting)


**The Emergence of Personal Authoritarian Rule (1 meeting)**


**Case study: Stalin’s Rise to Power (1 meeting)**


**Book Discussion (based on the midterm)**

**Coup d’état and Military Dictatorships (2 meetings)**


**Final Paper Meeting I**

**Institutions and Dictatorships: Legislatures and Parties (2 meetings)**


**Case study: China (1 meeting)**


**Final Paper Meeting II**

**Elections and Dictatorships (2 meetings)**


**Policies in Dictatorships: Economic Development (1 meeting)**


**Case Study: The Natural Resource Curse (1 meeting)**


**Final Paper Meeting III**